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**THE AFRICAN UNION, U.S. AFRICA COMMAND, AND AIRLIFT:
BUILDING OPERATIONAL LOGISTICS CAPACITY
FOR THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE**



by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

04 May 2011

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Abstract

The African Union, U.S. Africa Command, and Airlift: Building Operational Logistics Capacity for the African Standby Force

U.S. strategic interests in Africa include countering the spread of violent ideologies, preventing conflict, and fostering stability. U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established to address these interests by building partnerships with African allies and the African Union (AU). The AU formally established an African Standby Force (ASF) to respond rapidly to conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. Unfortunately, the ASF is not yet operational and various members of the international community have provided the majority of the capacity for recent peace operations such as the AU missions to Sudan, Burundi, and Somalia. Rather than simply continuing to be a provider of logistical capacity, the U.S. is transforming its relationship with the AU. This transformation is focused on developing Africa's capacity to provide its own security and stability, including increasing AFRICOM emphasis on partnerships with regional organizations such as the ASF. To foster progress toward mutual U.S. and African interests of preventing conflict by underwriting regional stability, AFRICOM should establish a joint initiative with the ASF regional brigades to assemble a regionally based airlift capability to bridge the crucial gap in operational logistics.

INTRODUCTION

I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world as partners with America on behalf of the future we want for all of our children. That partnership must be grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect.

We welcome the steps that are being taken by organizations like the African Union...to better resolve conflicts, to keep the peace, and support those in need. And we encourage the vision of a strong, regional security architecture that can bring effective, transnational forces to bear when needed.

America has a responsibility to work with you as a partner to advance this vision, not just with words, but with support that strengthens African capacity. When there's a genocide in Darfur or terrorists in Somalia, these are not simply African problems -- they are global security challenges, and they demand a global response.

President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President to the Ghanaian Parliament July 11, 2009

Over the last decade, the increasing global competition for resources, access to energy, and the 1998 terrorist attacks on African U.S. embassies have spurred a renewed focus on U.S. policy towards Africa. During President Obama's 2009 speech in Accra, Ghana, he laid out the significance of U.S. strategic interests in Africa which include countering the spread of violent ideologies, preventing conflict, and fostering stability.¹ U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established to address these interests in Africa by building partnerships with African allies and the African Union (AU). The AU has attempted to address the security and stability issues that plague Africa, and in 2004, the AU formally established an African Standby Force (ASF) to respond rapidly to conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.² Unfortunately, the ASF is not yet operational and various

¹ President Barak Obama (address, Ghanaian Parliament, Accra, Ghana, 11 July 2009).

² Mashood Issaka and Elijah Dickens Mushemeza, *Operationalizing the African Standby Force* (International Peace Institute, 2010), 6.

members of the international community have provided the majority of the capacity for recent peace operations such as the AU missions to Sudan, Burundi, and Somalia.³

Operational logistics is a substantial piece of currently missing AU capacity that is nonetheless requisite for peacekeeping, security, and humanitarian operations. Operational-level logistics is the capacity to deploy and sustain forces across a theater of operations, and Africa's austere natural environment presents difficult logistical challenges.⁴ The heart of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations lies in the ability to conduct operational logistics to achieve operational sustainment of assigned forces. In Africa, the limited transportation infrastructure requires that airlift capacity must be present to augment ground and sea transport in order to respond effectively to crisis and conflict situations.

The AU and the majority of its member states have very limited airlift capacity, and rely on external assistance to deploy and sustain AU forces. Rather than simply continuing to be a provider of logistical capacity, the U.S. is transforming its relationship with the AU. This transformation is focused on developing Africa's capacity to provide its own security and stability, including increasing AFRICOM emphasis on partnerships with regional organizations such as the ASF. **To foster progress toward mutual U.S. and African interests of preventing conflict by underwriting regional stability, AFRICOM should establish a joint initiative with the ASF regional brigades to assemble a regionally based airlift capability to bridge the crucial gap in operational logistics.**

³ Cecilia Hull and Emma Svensson, *African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Exemplifying African Union Peacekeeping Challenges* (Stockholm, Sweden: FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2008), 4.

⁴ Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), VII-76.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

A military-to-military partnership between the AU's burgeoning ASF and AFRICOM is a likely fit since both organizations share the mission of promoting stability in Africa. However, a number of African states mistrust U.S. involvement in African security affairs. They connect AFRICOM to memories of European colonialism and view the new command as militarization of the U.S. relationship with Africa. In addition, many Africans are cautious of intentions since U.S. policy essentially abandoned Africa following the Cold War. They feel that only the threat of violent extremism and China's growing influence cause the U.S. to make Africa a policy priority.⁵ This skepticism is readily apparent in AFRICOM's struggle to find a permanent home on the continent. Although a few countries have offered to host the command, the U.S. has been unsuccessful in getting broad African support for basing AFRICOM headquarters on the continent.⁶ African leaders are also wary of AFRICOM's mixed military and diplomatic structure, fearing that the U.S. military will direct diplomatic efforts to develop democracy and fight government corruption in Africa.⁷ Such opinions might be aggravated by an AFRICOM-ASF relationship, as a result of the perception that the U.S. would gain *de facto* ASF operational control to influence missions supporting U.S. rather than African interests.

Concerns about AFRICOM's intentions also influence U.S. funding and resources of ASF capacity. The challenges of funding any regional security organization are always significant, and the lack of financial support for the ASF regional brigades impedes the

⁵ José de Arimatéia da Cruz and Laura K. Stephens, "The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM): Building Partnership or Neo-Colonialism," *Journal of Third World Studies* 27, 2 (Fall 2010), 204, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

⁶ Nico Colombant, "Battle Begins for Hosting US Africa Command," *voanews.com*, 12 April 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Battle-Begins-for-Hosting-US-Africa-Command-119714109.html> (accessed 14 April 2011).

⁷ Michael Mihalka, Moussa Diop Mboup, and Douglas Lathrop, "Misguided Intentions: Resisting AFRICOM," *Military Review* 89, 4 (July-August 2009), 89, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

ability to build logistics and operations capacity for potential ASF missions.⁸ The AU and member states must be judicious in deciding what resources and capabilities will provide the most return on investment toward the goal of building an operational ASF. Organic military airlift capacity is particularly expensive, as exemplified by the Airbus 400M, a medium airlifter being purchased by European Union (EU) militaries for 100 million EUR each.⁹ The challenges of military transport aircraft procurement funding are illustrated by South Africa's 2009 decision to cancel its A400M program because of cost.¹⁰

The U.S. side of any AFRICOM-ASF partnership faces the same funding challenges. Current debates over U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) budgets will significantly affect programs to fund ASF airlift capacity. Even if the AFRICOM budget is protected, funding for ASF airlift may be under foreign aid auspices, always a budget-cut target.¹¹ Therefore, any program to develop ASF operational logistics will face intimidating funding challenges and must prove itself unequivocally to all decision makers.

THE AFRICAN UNION REQUIREMENT

The arguments against building a long term relationship with the ASF are valid, but must be compared against the risk of inaction to both U.S. and AU interests of bolstering Africa's capacity to address its security and stability problems. The AU has taken assertive steps to work toward a regional security capability, and in 2003, the AU established the Peace and Security Council (PSC) to address conflict prevention and mitigation. The PSC operational arm is the ASF concept, and the ASF design is five standby brigades, one in each

⁸ Issaka and Mushemeza, *Operationalizing the African Standby Force*, 2.

⁹ Jane's All the World's Aircraft, "Airbus Military A400M," <http://search.janes.com> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹⁰ Jane's World Air Forces, "South Africa - Air Force," <http://search.janes.com> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹¹ Donna Cassata, "Spending cuts bill hits defense and foreign aid," *Associated Press*, 13 April 2011, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/> (accessed 15 April 2011).

of Africa's five regions: Central, Southern, Eastern, Northern, and Western.¹² The regional brigade primary function is to respond to security crises under the umbrella of six potential mandates identified in the AU's common defense and security policy. The first three mandates are observer missions and the second three involve escalating crises that range from the deployment of forces for peacekeeping to direct intervention in a regional conflict.¹³

ASF brigades are designed to meet peace operation requirements and contain approximately 4,300 personnel, 175 vehicles, and four helicopters.¹⁴ Brigade size requires a significant logistical footprint and complex transportation plans for deployment and sustainment. However, a planned core ASF task is to deploy forces rapidly to interdict or deter conflict in response to an AU mandate. The ASF rapid response concept is to deploy an initial response force of 1,000 personnel within 14 days and an additional 1,500 within 30 days.¹⁵ This aggressive deployment timeline requires robust transportation capability to respond quickly to missions in remote African regions. However, in recent peace operations, the AU has been unable to achieve effective "operational reach," defined by Professor Milan Vego as "the distance over which one's military power can be massed and employed decisively."¹⁶ Extending ASF operational reach requires transportation capacity, and because the austere nature of Africa limits transportation options, airlift must be a primary player in AU plans to respond effectively to a security or humanitarian crisis.

Unfortunately, Africa's transportation infrastructure is very limited; with the exception of Antarctica, it is considered the most logically challenging continent on the

¹² Jackie Cillers, *The African Standby Force: An Update on Progress*, Paper 160 (Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2008), 2.

¹³ Theo Neethling, "Pursuing an Effective African Peacekeeping Capability: What Could be Learned from Burundi and Darfur," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* (November 2007), 54, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹⁴ Cillers, *The African Standby Force: An Update on Progress*, 11

¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶ Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice*, VII-78.

globe. Africa's logistics network comprises numerous seaports along the coastline, but options are limited to reach into the massive interior of a continent that accounts for one-fifth of the earth's land.¹⁷ Rail transport is available along a few corridors, but the railways are frequently out of service because of too-few resources to keep them functioning properly or because the routes pass through unstable regions. The rail network does not provide coverage across the continent because most routes were built during the colonial era to extract resources to the coast for external trade rather than intra-Africa trade.¹⁸ In addition, railway distribution is unequal. Of an estimated 45,000 miles of track, 30 percent is located solely in South Africa while twelve African countries have no railway systems at all.¹⁹

The primary rail alternative is trucking, which constitutes 90 percent of all inter-urban transport on the continent. However, the land road system is considered one of the worst in the world; for example, it can take up to 60 days to move cargo just 700 miles from Mombasa, Kenya, to Kampala, Uganda.²⁰ Africa's slow, unreliable ground transportation network does not provide the responsive logistical capacity that the ASF requires to meet its deployment and sustainment benchmarks for successful mission employment. Also, Africa's airfields suffer deteriorating runways, outdated air traffic control equipment, and minimal cargo and passenger handling equipment. Yet, despite this austerity, there is at least one international airport in each country and countless "dirt-strips" that can accommodate smaller airlifters to complement ground transport of military deployments.²¹

¹⁷ *Worldatlas.com*, s.v. "Africa," <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/country/af.htm> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹⁸ Afeikhena Jerome, *Infrastructure in Africa: The Record*, African Development Bank Economic Research Papers no. 46 (International: 1999), 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Anver Versi, "The Science and Art of Logistics in Africa," *African Business*, 333 (July

2007): 17-18, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5327/is_333/ai_n29363012/ (accessed 10 April 2011).

²¹ Jerome, *Infrastructure in Africa: The Record*, 31.

African transportation network limitations, combined with the AU's lack of logistics capacity, have inhibited the operational effectiveness of AU peace support operations (PSOs). The AU has conducted three significant PSOs since its formation in 2002, and each operation has faced major challenges to deploy, employ, and sustain forces effectively.²² The African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) deployed in 2003 to enforce ceasefire agreements between the Burundi government and rebel groups. AMIB eventually deployed over 3,000 peacekeepers and was able to stabilize Burundi enough for United Nations (UN) forces to take over.²³ However, the mission revealed significant deficiencies in AU member country capacities to deploy and sustain PSOs.²⁴ This was noted by the UN Secretary General, who reported: "the financial and logistic constraints under which the AMIB is operating prevents the force from fully implementing its mandate."²⁵ The limited success of AMIB was only possible because the U.S., EU, and UN provided resources to deploy and sustain the AMIB peacekeeping forces.²⁶ The well-documented AMIB logistical problems resulted in development of the "Burundi Model" for PSOs that would require AU countries to provide for their own logistics and sustainment.²⁷ This is a practical approach to the logistical problems since the AU does not have the organizational capacity to deploy or sustain PSOs, but the "Burundi Model" practical result has been that AU countries largely depend on logistical support from states and organizations outside Africa.

²² Hull and Svensson, *African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Exemplifying African Union Peacekeeping Challenges*, 4.

²³ Emma Svensson, *The African Mission in Burundi, Lessons Learned from the African Union's First Peace Operation* (Stockholm, Sweden: FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2008), 13.

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁵ Kofi Annan, *Report of the Secretary-General on Burundi*, UN Security Council Report S/2004/210, (New York: United Nations, 2004), 13.

²⁶ Svensson, *The African Mission in Burundi, Lessons Learned from the African Union's First Peace Operation*, 17.

²⁷ Hull and Svensson, *African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Exemplifying African Union Peacekeeping Challenges*, 8.

African dependence on external logistical assistance continued with the AU's second major PSO, the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS). AMIS was established to monitor the ceasefire agreement between North and South Sudan, and bring security to the province of Darfur. AU peacekeeper troop deployment began in May 2005 and reached a total of 7,000 by the middle of 2006, double the size of AMIB.²⁸ However, AMIS relied exclusively on NATO to provide airlift to deploy peacekeepers into Darfur because most contributing AU countries possessed few or no airlift assets.²⁹ The logistical limitations caused by the AU's lack of airlift impacted operations and decreased the velocity of the AMIS response.³⁰

The most recent major PSO led by AU peacekeeping forces was the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Established in January 2007, it supported the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia to provide security for humanitarian assistance, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts. The original mandate from the AU Peace and Security Council called for 8,000 troops, but the number actually deployed was closer to 3,000.³¹ Though two brigades from Burundi were prepared to deploy, AMISOM was unable to move them, because of insufficient transportation and sustainment capacity, just as in AMIB and AMIS. AMISOM logistical support was based on the "Burundi Model," and thus the two primary troop contributing countries to AMISOM relied on external sources to deploy and sustain their forces during AMISOM.³² The consequence of the operational logistics limitations in AMISOM, as well as AMIB and AMIS, was that logistics capacity defined mission objectives rather than mission objectives defining logistics capacity and conduct.

²⁸ Neethling, "Pursuing an Effective African Peacekeeping Capability: What Could be Learned from Burundi and Darfur," 62.

²⁹ Ibid., 61.

³⁰ Catherine Guicherd, *The AU in Sudan: Lessons for the African Standby Force* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007), 4.

³¹ Hull and Svensson, *African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Exemplifying African Union Peacekeeping Challenges*, 8.

³² Ibid., 29.

The inherent risk to any AU plan based on the “Burundi Model” is reliance on external sources to supply the initial critical airlift. Although the U.S., EU, UN, or civilian contractors may have the capacity to provide the needed support, there is no guarantee that they will make resources available in a responsive manner, especially when it involves high-demand, low-density airlift aircraft. If the AU is serious about supporting the ASF regional brigades, a dedicated, responsive, and robust airlift capacity must be part of the solution to ASF operational logistics challenges.

U.S. INTERESTS

It is apparent that the AU’s and ASF’s ability to conduct peacekeeping and humanitarian operations is hampered by the lack of operational logistics, specifically airlift. The U.S. is capable of partnering with the ASF to fill this gap, but the justification of U.S. efforts to improve ASF operational reach must support U.S. interests in Africa. In addition, there must also be compelling reasons for the AU, ASF regional brigades, and individual African states to support an airlift partnership between AFRICOM and the ASF.

The early 1990s marked the U.S. exit from direct engagement on the African continent. This was because U.S. policymakers assigned limited strategic value to Africa as the Cold War battle of ideologies ended.³³ This began to change in 1998 after attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa, and over the last decade factors such as energy access, global trade agreements, armed conflict, and terrorism have renewed Africa as a U.S. strategic priority.³⁴ This renewal caused the establishment of AFRICOM and an increasingly vocal U.S. interest in Africa’s long-term stability and prosperity.

³³ Lauren Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 2010), 14.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

The emphasis on African stability is a thread articulated at each level of executive authority in the U.S. government. First, the President's *2010 National Security Strategy* discusses concentrated strategic involvement to improve African security through external investment in regional capabilities.³⁵ Second, the U.S. *2010 National Military Strategy* identifies the U.S. commitment to assist the development of AU regional partnerships, and specifically the development of ASF military capacity.³⁶ Finally, the *2011 AFRICOM Posture Statement* highlights the Combatant Commander's intent to deter and resolve conflict by developing African-led security capacity for effective peace operations and crisis response.³⁷

The AU's desire to address security and humanitarian challenges is exemplified by the peace operations in Burundi, Sudan, and Somalia. In addition, the AU's commitment to the ASF concept of a regional security force is further evidence that its members are committed to resolving Africa's internal conflicts with African solutions. It is evident that to build the ASF into a self-sufficient security force requires external assistance, but Africans are justifiably suspicious of U.S. intentions. The majority of the relationships between the U.S. and Africa have been bi-lateral engagements between two countries, but African leaders have clearly articulated that they would prefer AFRICOM to be working primarily through the AU and regional organizations.³⁸ This desire is tempered by a reluctance to accept U.S. military influence in planning, executing, and leading AU missions. Though vital to success in peacekeeping operations, logistics assistance generally does not impinge on the operational control and decision making of a military mission. Rather, with a long-term goal

³⁵ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: May 2010), 45-46.

³⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: February 2011), 12.

³⁷ Carter Ham, *United States Africa Command 2011 Posture Statement* (Washington, DC: April 2011), 10.

³⁸ Mihalka, Mboup, and Lathrop, "Misguided Intentions: Resisting AFRICOM," 91-92.

of ASF logistical autonomy, building logistics capacity will go a long way toward enabling an ASF that can operate independently.

There is a distinct connection between the U.S. interest of promoting stability and security throughout Africa, and a U.S. partnership to develop the airlift capacity of the ASF. The factors of energy, trade, conflicts, and terrorism all have one thing in common, and that is access. Security and stability to enable energy resource production and trade require persistent security presence in affected regions. In the same manner, regional conflicts require an approach that can provide extensive access to protect and sustain the civilian populations caught in the conflict. That access can also create conditions to defeat insurgent and terrorist groups by co-opting the population from which “bad guys” draw sustainment and support. Integration of responsive airlift operations with ground and sea transportation options will enable sustained access to areas of contention while providing sustainment to humanitarian and peacekeeping forces.

AIRLIFT IN AUSTERE ENVIRONMENTS

The mutual strategic interests and operational advantages of an AFRICOM-ASF partnership are supported by extensive U.S. experience employing airlift in austere environments, including partnerships to train allies in airlift conduct. Relevant examples include extensive tactical airlift throughout South Vietnam, U.S. airlift in support of the 1960 UN Security Resolution to restore order to the Congo, and the ongoing effort to rebuild the Afghan Air Force. The thread that emerges from these examples is the development and application of air transport in geographically challenging environments while working with partners who have significant resource limitations.

U.S. airlift in Southeast Asia was one of the first examples of air mobility being widely employed to support unconventional methods against enemy guerillas. Though U.S. forces ultimately did not succeed in winning the “hearts and minds” of the civilian population, air transport gave the U.S. and South Vietnamese allies a significant force multiplier that permitted rapid deployment and sustainment of operations in otherwise inaccessible remote areas.³⁹ An example of this unique capability was resupply of U.S. Special Forces operating with the CIA’s Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs). These missions used short, unimproved airfields with minimal parking space. Many of the landing strips were less than 2,000 feet long and required rugged aircraft such as the C-7 Caribou because of their unique ability to land and take off in remote regions.⁴⁰ These light airlift aircraft in Vietnam defined a capability known as “assault” airlift, filling the gap between heavy-lift helicopters and larger fixed-wing airlifters. Though helicopters could carry a heavier payload, they had range restrictions. Medium or “tactical” airlifters such as the C-130 Hercules could carry a significant amount of payload over long distances but could not use many of the shorter airfields or land on soft runways that could not withstand their higher landing weights. The lower-cost assault aircraft filled the requirement for access to remote airfields beyond helicopter range, yet were also too short for larger tactical airlifters.⁴¹

By comparison, modern-day ASF logistical challenges are similar since the mission of the ASF requires the capacity to project forces and support over moderate distances, and much of the African continent is defined by austere regions having the same short-field characteristics encountered by U.S. forces in Vietnam. Though not the single solution,

³⁹ Ray Bowers, *Tactical Airlift* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), vii.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁴¹ Robert Owen and Karl Mueller, *Airlift Capabilities for U.S. Counterinsurgency Operations*, RAND Report MG-565-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), xii.

Vietnam-style “assault” airlift should play an important part in plans to establish an ASF airlift capability.

While airlift operations in Vietnam were crucial to U.S. force sustainment in remote areas, South Vietnamese ability to conduct air transport after U.S. withdrawal in 1973 was vital to their long-term ability to conduct continuing counterinsurgency operations or for post war reconstruction purposes.⁴² In the early 1960s, the U.S. began an advisory program that provided training, personnel, and material resources to develop the South Vietnamese air transport. The program provided training and instruction across multiple aspects of air transportation, to include flight operations, maintenance, and aerial port operations (aircraft loading/unloading). Additionally, the core of the U.S. advisor program was a partnership concept to achieve autonomous South Vietnamese airlift operations. For example, the aerial port personnel program started with direct training to the Vietnamese in 1967, and by 1970, a Vietnamese-run school for aerial port operations was opened, which allowed U.S. forces to relinquish their instructor role.⁴³ Though it took the better part of a decade, the sustained partnership paid off as the airlift arm of the South Vietnamese Air Force was essentially self-sufficient by 1973.⁴⁴ The U.S. and Vietnamese partnership spanned the gamut of competencies required to employ operational logistics through air transport. This model of partnership is especially relevant to the ASF’s current inability to deploy and sustain its forces. An integrated approach to providing equipment and training across the continuum of operational logistics could maximize the effectiveness of an AFRICOM-ASF partnership.

In 1960-64, during the same time-frame as U.S. airlift efforts in Vietnam, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) also conducted significant airlift operations in the Congo to support a UN

⁴² Bowers, *Tactical Airlift*, 581.

⁴³ Ibid., 599.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 581.

resolution to restore order. The Congo mission primarily used C-130s to deploy UN troops to Leopoldville and Stanleyville, as well as to evacuate U.S. citizens. Because of the remote nature of Africa this mission required a complex network of staging and refueling bases that included 52 airfields in 33 countries to deploy 10,000 UN troops and provide for their sustainment.⁴⁵ Though today's U.S. and EU larger airlift capabilities could move similar loads within Africa more efficiently, the remote nature of Africa prevails as airport infrastructure still does not permit large aircraft access to the vast interior regions of Africa. The Congo operations constitute one of the largest and longest airlift operations in Africa, and reveal some of the same challenges that the AU faced in recent peacekeeping operations.

First, self-sustainment of basic needs such as food, water, and fuel is a mission requirement for military operations in Africa.⁴⁶ Airlift operations must be prepared to provide these needs throughout the duration of the operation. Second, command and control of airlift operations necessitates a communications capability that is able to function in remote areas.⁴⁷ ASF airlift programs must include training to manage and integrate airlift command and control with related operational logistics needs of the mission. Finally, austere or remote operations require aircraft dedicated to air transport operations.⁴⁸ Just as the U.S. has placed great emphasis on building and sustaining its airlift fleet over the years, the AU must view the development of a regional air transport capability as vital to operational reach in future AU and ASF missions.

Jumping forward to present-day operations, the U.S. has been committed to developing the Afghan Air Force (AAF), specifically its airlift arm, since 2002. Afghanistan

⁴⁵ Gilles K. Van Nederveen, *USAF Airlift Into the Heart of Darkness, the Congo 1960-1978: Implications for Modern Air Mobility Planners* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2001), 21.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

has many of the same remote geographical challenges as Africa, and feedback from the ongoing U.S. effort to build Afghan airlift capacity is pertinent to efforts aimed at establishing an ASF air transport capability. The first step of the U.S. effort in Afghanistan was an extensive planning and assessment phase to identify current capabilities and define future needs of the Afghan forces.⁴⁹ This planning phase was critical in presenting the Afghan military leadership with an accurate picture of their situation so that they could make informed decisions about training and equipping Afghan forces to employ airlifters. Another conclusion was that primary reliance on light (or assault) airlift capability was the correct match to support counterinsurgency given limited resources and infrastructure throughout Afghanistan.⁵⁰ Finally, an effective program to build capacity must be resourced and sustained over the long term. The U.S. initially estimated a six-year timetable to bring the AAF to self-sufficiency in 2012. However, funding and resource constraints will probably cause delay because as of April 2011, the AAF only has half of the planned 20 C-27 Spartan airlifters.⁵¹ The funding available for the AAF program has primarily come from Global War on Terrorism funds, but these funds are supplemental and not automatically renewed annually.⁵² To support Africa's ASF, a steady funding source will be necessary for the extended time period that a program of this type requires.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A JOINT SOLUTION

The framework for a successful effort to achieve regional ASF operational logistics self-sufficiency first requires trusted partnerships with lead states in which the program is to

⁴⁹ Jennifer D. Moroney, Kim Cragin, Eric Gons, Beth Grill, John E. Peters, and Rachel M. Swanger, *International Cooperation with Partner Air Forces*, RAND Report MG-790-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, January 2009), 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁵¹ US Federal News Service, "Afghan Air Force Sets New Flying-hour Record for C-27," 5 April 2011.

⁵² Moroney, Cragin, Gons, Grill, Peters, and Swanger, *International Cooperation with Partner Air Forces*, 50.

be implemented. The next step is a comprehensive assessment to determine how to meet specific regional ASF needs within resource constraints. Finally, the implementation program must be a “joint” approach that addresses the full spectrum of transportation options (air, land, sea). Airlift capacity must be a part of this joint solution because it is the core capability that will enable the ASF to handle emerging crisis situations. However, airlift alone will not be able to provide a “cure-all” to ASF logistical shortfalls. Rather, the solution requires a comprehensive approach that starts with airlift, and integrates operational logistics efforts across all forms of transportation.

Establish a partnership in the right place. The five ASF regions are at different stages of progress toward an operational ASF capability. Initially developing a relationship with one ASF will establish a precedent of trust that can be an example on which to build partnerships in the other regions. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force is an example of the necessary initial potential to establish a program. AFRICOM is already authorized to work directly with ECOWAS and has established logistics training classes taught by the U.S. military under AFRICOM’s Partnership for Integrated Logistics Operations and Tactics (PILOT) program.⁵³ Additionally, ECOWAS contains some infrastructure geared toward development of logistics capacity with the Kofi Annan International Peace Training Center (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana and one of the few functional African logistics depots in Freetown, Sierra Leone.⁵⁴

Perform a needs-based assessment. Once a region has been selected, an assessment of operational logistics and transportation capability should be conducted to determine how

⁵³ United States Africa Command, “FACT SHEET: Partnership for Integrated Logistics Operations and Tactics (PILOT),” *United States AFRICOM Public Affairs*, 20 February 2009, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=2696&lang=0> (accessed 17 March 2011).

⁵⁴ Daniel Kolva, “The ASF and AFRICOM: Partnering for Peace in Africa,” *Peace and Stability Operations Journal Online* (February 2011), 5, <http://pksoi.army.mil/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

to increase ASF capacity to meet a mandate of deploying 1,000 personnel to a regional location within fourteen days and sustain them. The assessment must account for all forms of transportation, including ground, rail, air, and sea to determine how best to integrate multiple forms of transportation to meet deployment and sustainment timelines. The U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) Joint Assessment Team (JAT) model could be employed to conduct this comprehensive assessment. The JAT comprises joint cross-functional experts in mobility, transportation, and logistics with the ability to assess distribution network capability. Since its inception in 2006, the JAT has been successfully employed multiple times in U.S. Central Command to assess mobility operations.

Choose transportation hardware. Based on capacity assessment matched to requirements and resources available, identify the right types of transportation assets to procure. Though this decision is situational in nature, it is a good assumption that resource and funding constraints will not allow the purchase of military airlifters such as the C-27J, C-130J, or A400M, which range in cost from 25 to 100 million dollars each.⁵⁵ Rather, the choices for aircraft should be geared toward choosing the correct light or “assault” airlifter that can efficiently integrate with ground transportation to meet deployment and sustainment requirements. There are a number of “off the shelf” options for light airlifters. One example is the Basler BT-67, a converted DC-3 that can carry 36 passengers or 11,000 pounds of cargo over a range of 1,000 nautical miles with the ability to land on short airfields of less than 1,500 feet, costing seven to ten million dollars per aircraft.⁵⁶ Purchasing five BT-67s instead of a single C-130J would exceed the ASF metric of 1,000 personnel in 14 days,

⁵⁵ Jane's All the World's Aircraft, “Airbus Military A400M,” <http://search.janes.com> (accessed 10 April 2011).

⁵⁶ Jane's Aircraft Upgrades, “Boeing (Douglas) DC-3 - Basler Turbo-67 (BT-67) Conversion,” <http://search.janes.com> (accessed 10 April 2011).

running just three missions daily over 10 days, estimating conservatively three to five aircraft available per day.

Implement full-spectrum joint logistics training. Acquiring aircraft is only one aspect of developing an effective operational logistics program. Significant training and resources must be dedicated to aircrew training, command and control, aircraft maintenance, aerial port, airfield operations, ground/sea transport integration, and logistics management. The commitment to funding and resourcing this training must be over the long-term and be an established program of record. Current joint programs such as AFRICOM's PILOT and the Africa Deployment Assistance Partnership Team (ADAPT), and new capabilities like the USAF's Mobility Support Advisory Squadron already have the expertise and capability to address many of these training issues, but they must be resourced, integrated, and tailored to support the goal of ASF logistical self-sufficiency.

A light airlift capability can transport personnel and basic sustainment commodities, but vehicles and oversized cargo must be transported by larger airlift or ground/sea transport, and a joint integration plan for the ASF with Army, Air Force, and Navy personnel could help improve the velocity and efficiency of deployment and sustainment efforts. USTRANSCOM's follow-on capability to the JAT, the Joint Task Force-Port Opening (JTF-PO) element is also a relevant model by which to develop a training program for the ASF. JTF-PO comprises Army, Air Force, and Navy personnel with the capacity to open and operate air, ground, and sea deployment operations. This specialized team reduces the seams between the changeover from air to ground, or sea to ground transportation and vice-versa. This capability was proven in 2010, when the JTF-PO opened and operated the Port-au-

Prince airport and seaport for the first 45 days following the massive Haitian earthquake.⁵⁷

They effectively managed the logistical distribution nodes during one of the largest disaster relief responses in recent history. It has taken decades for the U.S. military to achieve effective joint operations such as the JTF-PO, but an ASF program that emphasizes a joint approach to operational logistics has the potential to allow the burgeoning ASF to reap the benefits of joint operations much sooner, offering the AU a real chance at fielding a truly self-sufficient, self-sustaining security force capability.

FINAL REMARKS

The U.S., AU, and its member states all have shown a commitment to fostering security and stability on the African continent through regional engagement. A fully functional ASF is an important step toward achieving that stability and security. The primary ASF missions of crisis response, conflict resolution, and humanitarian assistance are dependent upon the capacity to deploy, sustain, and project logistical support. The lack of operational logistics and resultant operational reach is the “Achilles’ heel” that keeps the ASF from taking the next step to a fully functioning force. The AU’s regional security concept will lose momentum if the ASF is unable to deploy or sustain its troops. An AFRICOM partnership with the ASF to increase airlift capacity and improve integration of air, land, and sea transport can keep this momentum alive through judicious use of limited resources and funding. Though success must be measured in years rather than weeks or months, cultivating U.S. strategic partnerships in Africa to preserve access to an increasingly important region of the world is worth the time, effort, and money.

⁵⁷ Matthew Jones, “CRG Experience in Haiti,” *Air Land Sea Bulletin*, January 2011, 5.

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